

# The Axis of Appeasement

*"Leading Republicans from Congress, the State Department and past administrations have begun to break ranks with President Bush over his administration's high-profile planning for war with Iraq."*

New York Times, August 16, 2002

Wait a minute. "Leading Republicans from . . . the State Department . . . have begun to break ranks with President Bush"? Isn't the State Department part of the Bush administration? How can its "leading Republicans"—Colin Powell and his deputy, Richard Armitage—"break ranks" with the president they work for?

Let's be clear. President Bush's policy is regime change in Iraq. President Bush believes that regime change is most unlikely without military action. He considers the risks of inaction greater than the risks of preemption. No doubt he and his administration could have been doing a better job of making that case in a sustained and detailed way. But that is not why an axis of appeasement—stretching from Riyadh to Brussels to Foggy Bottom, from Howell Raines to Chuck Hagel to Brent Scowcroft—has now mobilized in a desperate effort to deflect the president from implementing his policy.

The appeasers don't want the president to do a better job of explaining his policy. They don't agree with his policy. They hate the idea of a morally grounded foreign policy that seeks aggressively and unapologetically to advance American principles around the world. Some, mostly abroad and on the domestic left, hate it because they're queasy about American principles. Some, mostly foreign policy "realists," hate it because they're appalled by the thought that the character of regimes is key to foreign policy. Some, cosmopolitan sophisticates of all stripes, hate talk of good and evil. Now they've come together in a last-gasp attempt to stop President Bush from setting American foreign policy on a course of moral clarity and global leadership.

The establishment fights most bitterly and dishonestly when it feels cornered and thinks it's about to lose. Churchill was attacked more viciously in 1938 and 1939

than earlier in the decade. So now the *New York Times* shamelessly mischaracterizes Henry Kissinger's endorsement of the president's policy as breaking ranks—when in fact it represents an acknowledgment by the most intellectually honest of the "realists" that realism, post 9/11, requires rethinking concepts like deterrence and preemption. And now Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska wanders into Pat Buchanan-land with his comment that "maybe [Richard] Perle would like to be in the first wave of those who go into Baghdad." And now Brent Scowcroft (writing in the *Wall Street Journal*) thinks that a persuasive *casus belli* would be "compelling evidence that Saddam had acquired nuclear weapons capability." But as Henry Kissinger said in a television interview last week, "if there is no action now, that means that we are saying, we will wait until these weapons are used and react to an actual provocation. That is going to produce, if it comes, horrendous casualties."

Reading the Scowcroft/*New York Times* "arguments" against war, one is struck by how laughably weak they are. European international-law wishfulness and full-blown Pat Buchanan isolationism are the two intellectually honest alternatives to the Bush Doctrine. Scowcroft and the *Times* wish to embrace neither, so they pretend instead to be terribly "concerned" with the administration's alleged failure to "make the case." Somehow, Vice President Cheney's fine speech in San Francisco on August 7 (see below), or Condoleezza Rice's superb August 15 interview with the BBC, to say nothing of Donald Rumsfeld's impressive press briefings and President Bush's strong statements—these don't count.

But of course the problem with the administration has nothing to do with Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, or Rice. The problem is with the leading Republican in the State Department. Where is Colin Powell? The secretary of state is the lead spokesman for American foreign policy. *This* secretary of state, because of his popularity at home and his stature abroad, could be particularly helpful if he were to join the president, the vice president, the national security adviser, and the defense secretary in making the case for the Bush Doctrine with respect to Iraq. Instead, he allows

his top aides to tell the *New York Times* on background that he disagrees with the president and is desperately trying to restrain him. And according to the *Washington Post*'s Jim Hoagland, he complains privately that his boss is uninterested in foreign policy. When told that previous secretaries of state had an hour alone every week to talk foreign policy with the president, Powell is reported to have asked, "But what would I do with the other 55 minutes?" Well, what he

could do is spend those minutes figuring out how best to execute the president's policy—or he could step aside and let someone else do the job.

Colin Powell is an impressive man. He is loyally assisted by the able Richard Armitage. They are entitled to their foreign policy views. But they will soon have to decide whom they wish to serve—the president, or his opponents.

—William Kristol

## Dick Cheney on Iraq and the War on Terror

*Excerpts from the vice president's address to the Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, August 7, 2002.*

The attacks of 9/11 confront us with a whole new set of considerations—from our ongoing vulnerability to international terrorism, to the possibility that terrorists will gain access to weapons of mass destruction. In the rubble of Afghanistan we've found confirmation, if any were needed, that bin Laden and the al Qaeda network are seriously interested in nuclear and radiological weapons, and in biological and chemical agents.

It's one thing to have that sort of possibility discussed in foreign policy seminars. It's quite another to have in your hand documents clearly describing their aspirations and plans for acquiring these capabilities, so that they can use them against the United States and our friends and allies around the world. In the case of Saddam Hussein, we have a dictator who is clearly pursuing these capabilities—and has used them, both in his war against Iran and against his own people.

In the words of a recent editorial in the *Economist*, "wishful thinking in the face of mortal danger is bad policy." And as President Bush has made very clear, the government of the United States will not look the other way as threats accumulate against us.

Every significant threat to our country requires the most careful, deliberate, and decisive response by America and our allies. As all Americans now understand, the struggle for our freedom and security is proceeding on different fronts, engaging the economic, diplomatic, intelligence, and military resources of the United States. There will be times of full and sustained combat action, as in Afghanistan. There will be other, quieter times, when success comes without need of military force. But at all times, at every turn, we will press on, because the stakes could not be greater. Deliverable weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists would expose this nation and the civilized world to the worst of horrors. And we will not allow it. We will not live at the mercy of terrorists or terror regimes.

More than sixty years ago, in the early stages of World War Two, General George C. Marshall made a pledge on behalf of the nation that resonates very well in our time. "Before the sun sets on this terrible struggle," he said, "our flag will be recognized

throughout the world as a symbol of freedom on the one hand, and overwhelming power on the other."

At the beginning of this new century, the United States is again called by history to use our overwhelming power in defense of freedom. We have accepted that duty, because we know the cause is just, we understand that the hopes of millions depend on us, and we are certain of the victory to come. The President and I are mindful of the tremendous responsibilities that have been placed in our hands. And we are grateful to you, our fellow citizens, for giving us the opportunity to serve the greatest nation on the face of the earth. . . .

\*\*\*\*\*

*From the Q & A*

QUESTION: If Iraq agrees to international weapons inspections, would we call off the war—or not move forward in that effort?

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: Well, let me emphasize that the President has not made a decision at this point to go to war. We're looking at all of our options. It would be irresponsible for us not to do that. But the issue here isn't inspectors. That's a secondary item, if you will. The issue is the fact that he's required to dispose of his weapons of mass destruction and the inspectors are merely the device by which the international community can assure itself that he's done so.

So many of us I think are skeptical that simply returning the inspectors will solve the problem. A great deal depends upon what conditions they would operate under; would they be able to go anywhere, any time, without notice on extensive searches? You've got to remember he's had about four years now to hide everything that he's been doing, and he's gotten to be very good at that, worked at it very aggressively. So even if you had the return of inspectors, I'm not sure they would be able to do enough to be able to guarantee us and our friends in the region that he had, in fact, complied. He's gotten very good at denial and deception.

But we do know, as I say, from defectors and from other sources, that he continues to have robust programs, and a debate with him over inspectors is simply—I think would be an effort by him to obfuscate and delay and avoid having to live up to the accords that he signed up to at the end of the Gulf War. ♦